

## **WORSHIP AT HOME – 22<sup>ND</sup> August 2021 – Jesus is Messiah**

Dear Friends,

So the year goes on apace and life changes all the time as we adapt to fewer restrictions while still looking out for our own health and for that of all those around us. I hope that life is treating you and those you love well – but if there are troubles remember we are never alone but always held in the love and compassion of God through Jesus Christ.

Today's gospel reading leads us to Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah. Every blessing, Margaret

---

---

**Call to Worship:** Lord of the Church, we pray as your people in this community and for your wider family around the world.

Where we are bound by dogma, loose in us new expressions of worship.

Where we are bound by prejudice, loose in us new generosity.

Where we are bound by structures, loose in us more freedom.

Where we are bound by our disappointments, loose in us new encouragement, that the best of all that has been, and the excitement of all that is to come, may be realised in us for all to see. We pray in Jesus' name.

**Amen.**

### **The words to 'At the name of Jesus' written by Caroline Maria Noel [1817-1877]. Singing the Faith 317**

1 At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,

Every tongue confess him King of Glory now.

'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,

Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

2 Humbled for a season, to receive a name

from the lips of sinners unto to whom he came.

Faithfully he bore it, spotless to the last,

brought it back victorious when from death he passed.

3 Bore it up triumphant with its human light,

through all ranks of creatures to the central height,

to the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast;

filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

4 In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue

all that is not holy, all that is not true;

crown him as your captain in temptation's hour;

let his will enfold you in its light and power.

5 For this same Lord Jesus shall return again,

with his Father's glory, with his angel train;

all the wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,

and our tongues confess him King of Glory now.

### **Prayers:**

Let us give thanks to God with our whole heart. Let us always sing God's praise.

We offer thanks for God's steadfast love and faithfulness to us.

We exalt God's name and honour God's word, for when we call, God answers us and strengthens our souls.

Lord, your glory shines forth from the highest heaven, and yet you have compassion on the lowly.

Great is your glory and your steadfast love endures for ever.

Let all the people praise your holy name.

**We give thanks to God with our whole heart. Amen**

Loving God, we confess that our lives are not always ones of living sacrifice, but that more often we are bounded by conditions of our own making about how far we will go to live out our faith.

**Forgive us for our lack of boldness.**

We confess that we do not always mirror your hopes of what your church will be – that we do not always accept difference or change easily – that we prefer to recognise each other's gifts if they are the ones we want to receive.

**Forgive us for our lack of openness.**

We confess that our world could be a much better place and that we could play our part in making it so. Often we do not challenge assumptions that injustice is inevitable and so not value the small things we can do to make a difference.

**Forgive us for our lack of urgency.**

God, the giver of life, we offer our lives back to you. Forgive us, change us and renew us, in the name of Christ. **Amen.**

And a personal prayer: O God, by the grace given to me, help me not to think more highly of myself than I ought, but to value the God-given life I have within me. I am one part of the body of your Church, as important as any other to the work you have given us to do. Show me how to discern the gifts I have, so that I may play my part. **Amen.**

**Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Isaiah 51: 1-6: [Living Bible paraphrased]:**

Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance, who seek the Lord! Consider the quarry from which you were mined – the rock from which you were cut! Yes, think about your ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, from whom you came. You worry at being so small and few, but Abraham was one when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation. And the Lord will bless Israel again, and make her deserts blossom; her barren wilderness will become as beautiful as the garden of Eden. Joy and gladness will be found there – thanksgiving and lovely songs. Listen to me, my people, listen, O Israel, for I will see that right prevails. My mercy and justice are coming soon, your salvation is on the way. I will rule the nations; they shall wait for me and long for me to come. Look high in the skies and watch the earth beneath, for the skies shall disappear like smoke, the earth shall wear out like a garment and the people of the earth shall die like flies. But my salvation lasts forever, my righteous rule will never die nor end.

**Romans 12: 1-8:**

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy – the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you. As God's messenger I give each of you God's warning. Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you. Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it, and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each needs all the others. God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, then prophesy whenever you can – as often as your faith is strong enough to receive a message from God. If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching. If you are a preacher, see to it that your sermons are strong and helpful. If God has given you

money, be generous in helping others with it. If God has given you administrative ability and put you in charge of the work of others, take the responsibility seriously. Those who offer comfort to the sorrowing should do so with Christian cheer.

**Comment:** In this passage from Isaiah we have yet another example of some of the key teachings of this part of the book, which have become central in both Judaism and Christianity. They are the heart of our understanding of God as positive, creative, redemptive and always dependable. The teaching always presupposes the time of Israel's salvation from the exile in Babylon. It shows a joyful confidence in the chance of a new beginning in the ancestral land of the people of God. The stress on the great themes of justice and salvation dominate this passage and we have a widening perspective which includes a larger section of humanity than only the land and people of Israel.

Paul, on the other hand, was concerned with moral teaching as he wrote for the Romans. It seems that there were a number of distinct groups there, some mainly Jewish, others mainly Gentile in their membership. At this time, Rome was the most populous city in the world and hugely diverse in the make-up of its inhabitants. The local population was relatively small while the rest came from all over the Mediterranean world. Here there is a plea for people to happily recognise the diversity, not only of nationalities but especially of the gifts which could contribute to the well-being of the whole church. Paul urges people to show humility and an inner resolve.

### **The words to 'Jesus is King' written by Wendy Churchill. Singing the Faith 327**

1 Jesus is King and I will extol him, give him the glory and honour his name.

He reigns on high, enthroned in the heavens, Word of the Father, exalted for us.

2 We have a hope that is steadfast and certain, gone through the curtain, and touching the throne.

We have a priest who is there interceding, pouring his grace on our lives day by day.

3 We come to him, our Priest and Apostle, clothed in his glory and bearing his name.

Laying our lives with gladness before him – filled with his Spirit we worship the King.

4 O Holy One, our hearts do adore you; thrilled with your goodness we give you our praise!

Angels in light with worship surround him -Jesus, our Saviour, for ever the same.

### **Matthew 16: 13-20:**

When Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples: 'Who are the people saying that I am?' 'Well,' they replied, 'some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; some, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.'

Then he asked them: 'Who do *you* think I am?'

Simon Peter answered. 'The Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'

'God has blessed you, Simon, son of Jonah,' Jesus said, 'for my Father in heaven has personally revealed this to you – this is not from any human source. You are Peter, a stone, and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven – whatever doors you lock on earth shall be locked in heaven, and whatever doors you open on earth shall be open in heaven!'

Then he warned the disciples against telling others that he was the Messiah.

### **Thoughts on the reading:**

Here Jesus and the disciples are in Caesarea Philippi which was at the extreme north of Herod the Great's kingdom, beneath Mount Hermon. A Greco-Roman worship centre with temples to various gods, chief among them Pan, giving the site its, Baniyas. It was in this religious melting pot, confronted by the variety of pagan worship styles and temples where Jesus asked the disciples these vital questions: 'Who do people say that I am?' and 'Who do *you* say that I am?'

The main temple here had been built by Herod's son, Philip, tetrarch of this region. It was he who changed the name of the town to Caesarea Philippi, and he who introduced the striking of images of various Caesars on coins of his realm.

In this region, settled by Greco-Roman Syrian Gentiles, there were many ideas about religions and rulers. When Jesus asked his first question and there were various views reported which would have him fit in with several systems. But when he asked the important second question, Simon answered – and with that answer we move from just asking about religion and politics to the creation of a new community of those who, by acknowledging Jesus' identity, become the focus of God's presence in the world.

When Peter spoke up, he offered a costly and risky answer, using the title 'Messiah' [literally, 'anointed one']. It is clear he was calling Jesus 'King'. This linked into all the religious hopes and predictions of a great leader sent by God – and also into the political expectation that this leader would be part of the house and line of King David. This would be the one to set his people free.

The moment when Peter was willing to take the risk of saying this – of expressing his relationship with Jesus in these controversial terms – was the moment when he flagged up both his faith in the mission of Jesus and his willingness to be involved in it. This was the moment that Jesus declared to be a divine revelation. The fact that Peter was willing to take the risk qualified him to be the rock, the foundation – and also signals the start of the Church – the beginning of a community enacting the purposes of heaven as heaven's agents on earth.

### **Meditation of Andrew. A piece written by Nick Fawcett.**

He asked two questions; almost the same and yet so very different. We'd no problem with the first, for it was about *others* – what *they* thought – who *they* said he was. But then he paused, looking us straight in the eye, and put us firmly on the spot.

'What about you? Who do you say that I am?'

There was no escaping it now – no hiding behind others. He wanted our answer, our response – each of us to decide.

Would we have done so? I don't know, for while we'd followed Jesus for months, marvelling at his deeds and drinking in his every word, we still wanted proof he was the one we were waiting for – the deliverer our whole nation so earnestly yearned to see. We admired him, loved him even, but we wanted to be sure before committing ourselves. We wanted to be certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that he was the real thing – the answer to our prayers.

So we might well have stood there all day, measuring our words before daring to speak, had not Peter waded in as usual, grasping the bull by the horns.

'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!'

And, of course, he was right, we all see it now, but it was Peter's faith – his willingness to take the plunge – that helped to open our eyes. We'd held back, wanting the last reservation dispelled, and could so easily have missed the wonderful truth staring us in the face: that God was with us, right by our side, come at last to set us free.

I believe it now. My mind is made up, decision made.

What about you?

**Prayers:** You ask us, Jesus, as you asked your disciples long ago and have asked generations since, to decide for ourselves who you are. Help us to answer that question, not hedging our bets, as we are inclined to do – not sidestepping the issue – not hiding behind the conclusions of others or taking refuge in cliché and jargon – but honestly coming to our own conclusions about what you have done and what you mean for us. And, having made our response, help us to recommit to it each day, so that our faith may be ever fresh – ever real. **Amen.**

Compassionate Lord, we pray for those bound by physical frailty – may they be loosed from frustration or despair.

We pray for those bound by the violence of others. May they be loosed from the power of oppression. We pray for those bound by corrupt governments and oppressive regimes. May they be loosed by your justice.

We pray for those bound by addictions. May they be loosed by your healing.

We pray for those who are ill – and we remember those known to us now. May they be loosed by care or skill.

We pray for those bound by grief. May they be loosed by your comfort.

We pray for ourselves, and for one another, that all that binds us may be loosed by these prayers, which we make in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

**The words to 'The Church's one foundation' written by Samuel John Stone [1832-1900] StF 690**

1 The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
she is his new creation by water and the word;  
from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;  
with his own blood he bought her and for her life he died.

2 Called out from every nation, yet one through all the earth,  
her charter of salvation one Lord, one faith, one birth;  
one holy name she blesses, and shares one holy food,  
as to one hope she presses with every grace endued.

3 In toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,  
she waits for consummation of peace for evermore;  
till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,  
at last the Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.

4 Yet she on earth has union with God the Three-in- One,  
and mystic, sweet communion with those whose rest is won.  
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,  
with them, the meek and lowly, in heaven your face shall see.

**Closing Prayer:**

God has a purpose for each one of us. We are given our parts to play in the Body of Christ.  
Let us go into the week ahead in peace and serve God with faith.

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us and all for whom we pray this day and for all eternity. Amen.**